



# Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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## Calendar

Tuesday

May 8, 2018

10 a.m.-noon

### LWVSCC Board Meeting

Santa Cruz County Bank

720 Front Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Saturday

June 9, 2018

10 a.m.-noon

### LWVSCC Annual Meeting

Featuring Carlos Palacios, CAO

Update: Vision Santa Cruz County

Seascope Golf Club, Seascope Room

610 Clubhouse Drive

Aptos, CA 95003

Hot breakfast buffet: \$20 per person

RSVP with payment by

**Friday, June 1**

Send check by mail to:

LWVSCC, P.O. Box 1745, Capitola,

CA 95010

Or pay via PayPal at

[lwvsc.org/calendar.html](http://lwvsc.org/calendar.html)

Tuesday

June 12, 2018

10 a.m.-noon

### LWVSCC Board Meeting

Santa Cruz County Bank

720 Front Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Download and print a [poster](#) or [flyer](#) for the annual meeting to share with friends at [lwvsc.org/calendar.html](http://lwvsc.org/calendar.html)

To participate in Vision Santa Cruz County, visit their website at [www.santacruzcounty.us/sp](http://www.santacruzcounty.us/sp).

## LWVSCC 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

### Update: Vision Santa Cruz County

Featuring

## Carlos Palacios

Santa Cruz County  
Administrative Officer

## Saturday, June 9

### 10 a.m. to noon

Seascope Golf Club, Seascope Room

610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos, CA 95003

RSVP by Friday, June 1. See below for details.



Immediately after being named Santa Cruz County Administrative Officer in 2017, Carlos J. Palacios initiated Vision Santa Cruz County, the county's first-ever strategic planning process. The community-based plan will establish a defined vision and mission for county government, along with focus areas and goals for county government operations. Palacios will present an update on the plan at the 2018 annual meeting of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County.

Through a series of community meetings and surveys, thousands of residents have provided feedback during the process, which is expected to last into the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Once completed, the plan will reflect Santa Cruz County residents' collective vision for the community, to be implemented through the county's mission in six strategic focus areas, including health and safety, housing, transportation, economy, environment, and county operations.

Palacios has over 30 years of experience in the public sector, including more than two decades at the executive level. From 1996 to 2015, he served as city manager of Watsonville, improving economic and educational opportunities for residents. Prior to his appointment as CAO in June 2017, Palacios served more than two years as assistant CAO. As county administrative officer, he oversees the County's second-largest workforce and strives to improve service delivery for residents while strengthening county partnerships.

The League's annual meeting is open to the public and will be held on Saturday, June 9 from 10 to noon at the Seascope Golf Club in the Seascope Room, 610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos. To RSVP for the event, which includes a hot breakfast buffet, send a check for \$20 per person by Friday, June 1 to LWVSCC, P.O. Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010. Or, pay with PayPal at [lwvsc.org/calendar.html](http://lwvsc.org/calendar.html).

## President's Message

As we transition to our 2018-19 fiscal year, I look forward to seeing many of our members and their guests at the festive June 9 Annual Meeting at Seascap Golf



Course Restaurant, featuring our guest speaker, Mr. Carlos Palacios, Santa Cruz County administrative officer, who will give us an update on Vision Santa Cruz County. We will also be voting on the officers and directors for the coming year and our proposed budget. Look for your Annual Meeting Kit to arrive in May.

I hope you will continue to support the important work of our League of Women Voters in the coming year by renewing your membership (save postage by renewing when you come to the annual meeting). With your support, we will continue to provide service to voters, encourage voter registration, advocate for the policies that make democracy work, and provide excellent educational programs for our members and the public. Of course, special thanks go to those who have been willing to serve on our board of directors during the past year, attend our meetings, and help with our programs.

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

For a complete list of candidates and state and local measures, go to [votersedge.org/ca](http://votersedge.org/ca)

Also see our [April 2018 VOTER Newsletter](#) for a review of state and local measures.

## Voter Service Report

At the June 5, 2018, top-two primary election (only the top two candidates who get the most votes advance to the general election), California voters will go to the polls to choose candidates for many local and statewide offices, including California governor and US senator.

Last day to register to vote for this election is May 21; you can request a mail ballot up until May 29. To do either of those and for more voter information, go to [votescount.com](http://votescount.com).

Expect your state voter information to be mailed to you between April 26 and May 15; local guides begin mailing the first week of May. On June 5, Santa Cruz County polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. There will be weekend voting in Santa Cruz and Watsonville on June 2 and 3 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Challenging Democrat Diane Feinstein for her US Senate seat are nine Democrats, eleven Republicans, one Libertarian, one Peace and Freedom, and nine independents. Democrat Anna Eschoo defends her seat in District 18 for the US House of Representatives against Republican John Karl Fredrich and independent Christine Russell. Two Democrats, Jimmy Panetta, incumbent, and Douglas Deitch will vie with independent Ronald Paul Kabat for the District 20 seat.

Twenty-seven candidates are running to fill the vacancy left by Governor Jerry Brown, including twelve Democrats, five Republicans, two from the Green Party, two Libertarian, one from the Peace and Freedom party, and five with no party preference.

For District 29 of the California State Assembly, Democrat Mark Stone has one challenger, Republican Vicki Nohrden.

California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, Democrat, defends against seven challengers. For attorney general, incumbent Xavier Becerra vies with one other Democrat and two Republicans. Other statewide executive offices include lieutenant governor (four Democrats, four Republicans, one Libertarian, and two independents); controller (five candidates); insurance commissioner (four candidates); treasurer (five candidates); superintendent of public instruction (four candidates); and state board of equalization, district 2 (four candidates).

Locally, Syda Cogliati and Zachariah Schwarzbach are competing to replace retiring Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Jeff Almquist. Faris Sabbah is running unchallenged for Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools, replacing retiring Michael Watkins. The following incumbent candidates are running unopposed: Jeff Rosell, district attorney; Jim Hart, sheriff-coroner; Gail Pellerin, county clerk; Sean Saldavia, county assessor-recorder; and Edith Driscoll, Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector.

Two districts on the county board of supervisors (non-partisan) are in play: in District 3, incumbent Ryan Coonerty is challenged by Steve Pleich; in District 4 incumbent Greg Caput has four challengers: Nancy Bilicich, Jimmy Dutra, Filipe Hernandez, and Leticia Mendoza. —Sue Becker, Voter Service Co-chair

## Legislative Interview: State Senator William Monning

In March League members interviewed William Monning, representative for California's Senate District 17. Present were Monning and his field representative Rachel Bickert; League members Barbara Lewis (recorder), Susan Becker, Dorothy Fry, Cecilie Schulze representing Santa Cruz County; and Claire Benson and Susan McCuen representing San Jose/Santa Clara.

Asked about the money bail system, Senator Monning expressed his support for reform and referenced his co-authorship of SB 10 (Hertzberg). Following negotiations with Governor Brown, this bill will need to leave the Assembly by May and go for concurrence in the Senate. Under the money bail system, a person of means can put up bail, while another who can't afford bail stays in jail; bail schedules can vary from county to county. This system violates fundamental human rights. Reform will relieve pressure on jails, where 63 % of inmates are awaiting trial. Problems mentioned by the senator include the cost of ankle bracelets and loss of jobs for those awaiting trial who cannot afford bail.

Senator Monning, a strong environmentalist and long-time supporter of the objectives of CEQA (the California Environmental Quality Act), favors streamlining the process for some high-density housing, but does not favor waivers that involve killing of animals. Land use planning historically involves local authorities, so there is a question of how much authority should be given to the state. To create uniformity and incentives to build affordable housing, a time limit should be set on review of permit applications. Monning favors legislative change to expedite CEQA review, such as prioritizing CEQA cases over appellate criminal cases in the courts.

Responding to concerns about sea level rise and legislative possibilities for dealing with threats to infrastructure, Senator Monning expressed his support for SB 100 and the goals of 50% renewable energy by 2030 and 100% renewable energy by 2045. He supported the "Planning for Sea-Level Rise Database" bill, passed in 2014, to create a database that provides current information for coastal communities about projected sea level rise. Monning also supported SB 1363, passed in 2016, to establish the Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Reduction

Program to restore eelgrass beds to sequester carbon and foster sea life. He supported cap and trade to help prevent sea level rise, especially for disadvantaged communities. California leads the nation in efforts to curb emissions. Infrastructure improvement is urgently needed, and Senator Monning supports the proposed 12-cent-per-gallon increase in the gas tax.

As a member of the Budget Committee, Senator Monning's key personal and legislative priorities are: passing an on-time budget that prioritizes access to education, children's health care, gun control, and access to clean, safe, drinking water. He feels that the second amendment to the Constitution was not intended by the framers to mean no restrictions on guns and supports safety checks for those with mental illness who purchase guns. Monning is sponsoring SB 623, which will establish the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to provide an ongoing source of funding to ensure all Californians have access to clean, safe drinking water, which he considers to be a human right.

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

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## Update: California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act

The LWV of California is gathering signatures for the California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act, a proposed ballot initiative that seeks to restore funds to California schools and communities by closing the corporate property tax loophole. Since our March 14 campaign kickoff, our local League has collected over 800 signatures in Santa Cruz County, and we are just getting started!

The LWV of California, together with the rest of the Make It Fair coalition, has decided to extend signature gathering efforts through the end of June and qualify the measure for the November 2020 election rather than the 2018 election in order to provide the best path to victory.

Not only does this allow us more time for signature gathering, but the 2020 ballot, being a presidential election year, offers a higher and more representative turnout—critically important in passing the measure. This also gets our measure at the top of the ballot and allows more time to educate

*Continued on Page 6*

## Correcting Course: Understanding and Overcoming Bias

At our April meeting, Lyle Troxell, who has hosted Geek Speak ([geekspeak.org](http://geekspeak.org)) for over 20 years on KUSP radio and as a podcast, spoke about how bias can have exponential effects on our perceptions of media and can influence the news we consume.

He began by using an example of how a boat's course can be influenced by wind, tide, and current. It takes many small changes in direction over time to adjust for those influences and to guide the boat to its destination with precision. The effects of many small changes lead to very large consequences. (Reference: [\*Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine\*](#) by Norbert Wiener; published in 1948.)

In [\*The Media Monopoly\*](#) by Ben Bagdikian (Beacon Press, 1983), the author, a former dean of the UC Berkeley School of Journalism, listed the large conglomerates then in control of the news, and, said Troxell, "It was shocking and scary and horrible that 50 companies controlled what was said in newspapers and television in 1983." The book's most recent edition in 2004 brings the number down to five: Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, News Corp, Viacom, and Bertelsmann. In 2018, Troxell stated, we're down to four: Disney, News Corp, Time Warner, and Comcast. "It's getting worse," says Troxell, "So, what's the big deal? Who cares?"

In the book [\*Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media\*](#) by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), the authors point out that ownership drives a lot of the bias in the news. The ownership of a paper inevitably influences journalists working for the paper. Troxell used the example of the Washington Post, now owned by Jeff Bezos, who also owns Amazon. A reporter working for the Washington Post is working for Jeff Bezos, and the editor of the paper may know him directly. "It's not that you're going to do something that Amazon wants you to do, it's not like a collusion in that regard; it's more like a very subtle thing. You're less likely to do the research about Amazon, you're less likely to do the research about Whole Foods Market, not because you think of Jeff Bezos as, maybe, punishing you, it's just because you know him,

you're engaged, and there's a little bit of a bias. It's not a big effect, it's a really small effect. Unfortunately, it has a really big consequence," explained Troxell.

The consequences are magnified when dealing with a conglomeration that controls many media sources. Where many competing news outlets exist, separation of ownership allows for competing news sources to cover what might have otherwise been left unreported due to ownership bias. "As you condense those information sources," said Troxell, "the motivations of those groups are condensed, and you get in a situation where you can't get the truth about Amazon."

Software companies, such as Google, Twitter, and Facebook, that rely on users interacting with their service to generate revenue from advertisers, use A/B testing to refine and improve their "product". When the developer wants to try a new idea that they think might improve their product, they conduct an A/B test, randomly dividing hundreds of thousands of their users into two groups: a control group gets the same experience as always, the other gets the new experience. After a period of time, they evaluate the data from both groups, and whichever experience produced the preferred result



Lyle Troxell explains the consequences of media bias.

will be what everyone experiences from then on.

When Facebook does A/B testing, what is their objective, their goal? Facebook provides a service experience to their user, but they're not getting any money from their users, they get money from advertisers. "In fact," Troxell said, "Facebook's actual money-making scheme is: get money from [the] advertiser, put that advertising in front of people, then the people either click on them, like them, sad them, whatever, but they engage with that ad. The customers for Facebook are the advertisers, and the product for Facebook is the user. So, it's

extremely important to understand, when using that service, about Facebook's motivation. Facebook's fundamental focus is to get the user to read and engage with the ads and click on them."

Troxell points out that each change might only improve the product a little bit, a fraction of a percent, but for Facebook, that fraction can be hundreds of millions of dollars. Again: small changes; really big consequences. "That guidance of slowly shifting their service over time with these tiny A/B tests, they get better and better at capturing our attention is the goal. The consequence of that is massive in our political sphere nowadays...the reason it's important to understand your bias is the reason why that "like" versus emotional buttons worked. It's not necessary that Facebook knows why it's working. All they need to know is: it had a bit of effect on their business."

Emphasizing the importance of understanding what content is trying to do to you, Troxell quoted Hank Green, American entrepreneur and educational video blogger, "We shouldn't be asking whether we're being manipulated...all content is designed to affect. We should ask what we are being manipulated to do. To laugh? To understand? To buy? To give in to fear?" Is content or marketing using your bias to weaponize your emotions and control how you think?

"We all have biases, and the best way to protect yourself from being manipulated by your bias is to understand your own bias," said Troxell. Most of our biases are not choices; breathing, for example: "We all have a severe bias for breathing and having an atmosphere we can breathe." Some are biological, such as optical illusions, which take advantage of something you cannot control about how you perceive the world to manipulate your mind directly without your consent. One example Troxell gave was perspective: the moon appears larger or smaller depending on whether you see it directly above you in the sky (looking smaller with no frame of reference) or on the horizon (next to a mountain, which you know is huge, so your brain interprets the moon as being equally large).

Our brain, points out Troxell, finds bias immensely useful: you stop touching a hot pan because it's hot; you get out of the pool before you suffocate (remember that bias towards breathing?). Context is important as well: if the pan is in the sink, context indicates it's not hot; if it's on the stove, it could be dangerously hot. You aren't consciously

aware of when it's OK to touch the pan; your body and mind help you get the context right.

As useful as this bias is, it has the side effect that what our emotions and subconscious tell us affects us all the time. It's easier to believe bad things about things we hate than about things we love. Our emotional reactions about things we love makes it harder to believe bad things about them. "It's not a giant effect," Troxell said, "We're rational actors, we can hear the facts, but our emotions or gut [feelings] lead us a little bit aside. Kind of a small effect with a big consequence."

Troxell recommended participating in Project Implicit ([implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu)) to discover your implicit associations about race, gender, sexual orientation, and other topics. Often those who don't think they are biased find that this simple exercise reveals they are.

Bias forms as our subconscious struggles to help filter the information we are constantly inundated with. We categorize things to help decide if they are dangerous to us: your subconscious responds more quickly than your conscious, so we automatically classify things to react faster and keep ourselves safe. This classification bias has a big consequence in our society.

It's important to train yourself to detect when you're being manipulated and why you're being manipulated, which takes a lot of practice. When something is scary (but not life threatening), take a moment, Troxell urges, to stop and consider why it is scary, who wrote this to scare you, and whether or not it's important to be scared about it at that moment. Try to think logically about it instead.

Miles Elam, Troxell's associate who assisted with the question and answer segment of the meeting, recommended [FactCheck.org](http://FactCheck.org) as a fact checking site that doesn't just evaluate whether the person is telling the truth or not, but actually details what about it was deceptive and what about it was a lie by omission. Fact checking sites can help in sorting through what is biased reporting and what is factual.

In selecting your news sources, the [Media Bias Chart](http://MediaBiasChart.com) at [AllGeneralizationsareFalse.com](http://AllGeneralizationsareFalse.com) helps sort out which news sources are factual from those whose reporting is analysis, opinion, selective, misleading, or just plain fabricated. Troxell pointed out that the chart's bell curve, with a cluster of useful, factual reporting outlets at the top, shows our society still agrees that factual reporting is important.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Send your check payable to League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County or LWVSCC with this form to LWVSCC, Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010-1745.

\_\_\_\_ \$65 Individual annual membership  
\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Two members in a household  
\_\_\_\_ \$30.00 Student membership  
\_\_\_\_ Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Checks made out to LWVSCC are not tax deductible.

To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWV Education Fund.  
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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Factual reporting doesn't come with a lot of engaging, emotional intensity or storytelling to entertain you. For the dry facts, Troxell suggests going to Reuters or Associated Press. Media such as Fox New or Democracy Now provide emotional engagement and entertainment.

Our bias is to focus on what's horrible and dangerous and scary: the things our subconscious is telling us that we need to be concerned about for survival. But, Troxell points out, many things are better now than they have ever been: it's easier to find out the truth than it ever has been, easier to learn a new skill, there are fewer deaths in childbirth. "There's a lot of 'great' going on...there are also really wonderful things happening that we should be proud and happy about, and [we need to] make sure that we fulfill ourselves with those things as well."

—Pam Newbury, VOTER Editor

Give feedback and view slides: [lyle.troxell.com/talks/2018](http://lyle.troxell.com/talks/2018).

View a [video of the presentation](#) and the question and answer session at [lwvsc.org/videos](http://lwvsc.org/videos).

*Continued from Page 3: Update*

and engage millions of voters. Our opposition has deep pockets and is ready to spend \$100 million or more to defeat reform. While this delay may be disappointing, the next two years will provide much-needed time to build the financial resources we need to win this fight, and we are in this fight to WIN!

Here's how you can help qualify the initiative for the ballot:

- Sign the petition! We will have petitions available to sign at our June 9 annual meeting.
- Gather signatures from your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers.
- Volunteer to gather signatures at community events.

Every signature gets us closer to our goal! We have so many League members, community members, and local organizations to thank for helping us, this is truly a community effort.

We have a new [frequently-asked-questions informational handout](#) that can be downloaded and printed at [lwvsc.org](http://lwvsc.org). We also have informational bookmarks with a brief summary of facts about the initiative and other educational materials. To join the effort to help gather signatures, get supplies of petitions and materials, or volunteer to collect signatures at a community event, contact us at [petitions@lwvsc.org](mailto:petitions@lwvsc.org) or call Pam Newbury at 831-423-6904.

For more information about the initiative, go to [evolve-ca.org](http://evolve-ca.org). To view a [video of Robert Reich](#) discussing this reform, go to [makeitfairca.com](http://makeitfairca.com).